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ABSTRACT

An examination of literature in the field of staff development reveals five models of inservice for principals. The traditional model involves enrolling in courses at colleges and universities. Institutes are short-term specific learning experiences. Competency-based training identifies knowledge and skills needed and focuses on influencing programs. The inservice academy is similar to the traditional model, but an agency provides classes. In networks, individuals from differennt schools and districts link together to share information. Evaluation of these models reveals that adults learn best in situations where they are connected to the process. The Principals' In-Service Program, developed with support of the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, builds on the positive features of the five models. Piloted in 1978-79, it focuses on the needs of local schools and principals. The structure is a collegial support group of 6-10 principals working together with a trained facilitator on long- and short-term problems with a defined agenda. Participants are committed to a full day once a month for 2 years. The group allows principals responsibility for their own learning and development. No implication is meant for superiority of any one of these models. The principals' role is important, and effective inservice education must be a priority for the 1980's. (MD)

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## IN-SERVICE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A STATUS REPORT

John C. Daresh and James C. LaPlant

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Even a casual review of recent educational literature reveals some recurring themes concerning the things that make some schools more effective than others. These themes have been used to assist school personnel in directing their efforts to develop or maintain effective schools. State education agencies have been particularly involved in disseminating information about the conditions needed for effective schools. In Ohio, for example, the Department of Education has identified seven critical factors for more effective schooling.[1] Factors found in effective schools are

—A strong sense of mission
—Strong leadership by the school principal
—High expectations for students and teachers
—A focus on specific instructional goals
—Sufficient opportunities for learning
—Parent/community involvement
—A positive learning climate

In addition to these factors, Purkey and Smith[2] also noted that, in order to increase the effectiveness of schools, staff development is needed to alter people's attitudes and behaviors and also to provide them with new skills and techniques which may be needed to engage in educational improvement efforts.

Of these conditions related to effective schools, two have particular relevance for the school administrator. First, Austin,[3] Rutter,[4] Edmonds,[5] and other researchers have indicated that the behavior of the school principal is the single most important factor for supporting high quality educational programs. As Lipham[6] noted, "While schools make a difference in what students learn, principals make a difference in schools." Second, current conditions in American education dictate the need for educators to become increasingly aware of emerging practices and trends in teaching and learning. Providing for professional growth and development and in-service education for school staffs must be viewed as a priority for the 1980s and beyond. New approaches that are more sensitive to the needs of school personnel facing our present era of retrenchment and decline must be promoted.

There is a paradox. While a good deal of attention has been turned toward the role of the principal as the key to educational improvement and also on the need for more effective strategies for staff development, relatively little has been done to combine these two areas of concern. Some attention has been directed at the emerging responsibility of principals to lead staff development activities within their schools.[7] For example, there is a suggestion that the traditional administrative task area of staff personnel will soon be changed from a focus on recruitment, hiring, and firing to professional development of staff. Despite these changes, however, little has been said concerning the type of professional growth opportunities designed specifically to address the concerns of principals.

It is increasingly clear that the role of the principal will require new knowledge, attitudes, and skills to bring about lasting school improvement. Somehow there has been developed an assumption that principals, because of their position, automatically possess all of the expertise needed to take on new challenges and responsibilities. But before principals will actually be able to carry out their important duties, they must have the opportunity to learn more and grow professionally. Therefore, this paper reviews a number of existing approaches to in-service for school principals which may have the potential for assisting educational leaders to carry out their tasks. In addition, we will share one particular model for providing in-service for principals that complements other efforts, and which also has the potential of modifying conditions within schools.

Two assumptions are made in this paper. First, although there have been frequent discussions concerning whether or not in-service is synonymous with staff development, or if in-service implies ways of addressing deficits while staff development suggests growth, the stance taken in this paper will be one which appears in the daily discussions of school personnel: In-service education is a subset of the larger concept of professional staff development. The second assumption is that, while a number of models for in-service for principals will be reviewed, there is no intention to suggest that one model is necessarily better or worse than others. We hold that, because the principal is so important in the improvement of schools, any form of support that might be effective in a particular situation, be it one of the models reviewed here, a combination of several models, or some approach not included, is worth implementing if it will help the principal do his or her job more effectively.

### Existing In-service Models

An examination of the literature in the field of general staff development and in-service reveals that only a small percentage is concerned with administrator in-service.[8] Nevertheless, there is

enough written about successful practices in recent years to note certain categories of professional development opportunities for principals. We propose that these categories can be described as five fairly distinct approaches or models: a traditional model, institutes, competency-based programs, the academy, and networking. Let us examine each of these models. There is no desire to imply that one must become attached only to one of these models; they are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, might best be viewed as complementary to one another.

*Traditional Model*

The traditional model is represented by practicing administrators enrolling in credit courses at colleges and universities, perhaps the most frequently employed strategy for professional development. The primary responsibility for determining the content and procedures of this in-service approach is with the university. Principals and other administrators select this model as a delivery system based on a desire to pursue additional course work in an area of particular professional interest, to obtain an advanced graduate degree, to renew or upgrade administrative certification, or some combination of all of these purposes.

There are a number of advantages in the traditional model. Among the greatest of these is the fact that this approach places heavy reliance on the university structure, a structure which more often than not assures some degree of quality control on the learning experience. Grades, course syllabi, and regular class schedules provide a framework where principals and others enrolled in the courses know essentially what they will get for their investment of time and money. Also, the content of courses is generally the product of at least some advanced planning concerning a given topic by a qualified professional educator. Thus, most university courses do not represent attempts to provide a "quick fix" to the complex problems faced by practitioners.

There are some weaknesses in this model as well. Perhaps the most significant among these resides in the very nature of the university trying to provide these types of learning experiences to principals. Regardless of the needs of practitioners, "the self interest of the university prevails in terms of the usual offering of courses."[9] This must be coupled with the recognition that the quality of the in-service experience is directly related to the quality of the institution providing the instruction. Another shortcoming of the traditional model is that, frequently, the principal enrolled in a university course is but a passive participant in the overall learning process. One-way communication from professor to student prevails, and there is no involvement of the participant in the selection of specific course objectives and activities. Finally, the traditional model is also limited because motivation to take part in university courses as in-service experiences is usually something external to the participant; the principal is pressed to take a course by the mandate of a group such as the state education agency. In short, university courses are excellent ways for participants to earn degrees, satisfy scholarly curiosity, or meet state certification requirements, but as long-term solutions to the need for more effective ongoing principal in-service they are quite limited.

*Institutes*

A second popular model of in-service for practicing school administrators is what might be termed institutes, or short-term learning experiences which are topic specific. Indeed this model is widely used. Few principals are able to go more than a few days without having their mailboxes filled with invitations to one institute or another.

Institutes—or workshops and seminars as they are also frequently called—are distinct from the other models we consider here because they are of a short duration and deal with such narrowly defined topics that they are more properly referred to as training events and not ongoing in-service programs. Still, their pervasiveness is such that they cannot be ignored as viable learning experiences for most practitioners.

Many institutes are sponsored by professional associations. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), National Association of Elementary Principals (NAEP), and the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) National Academy of School Executives, as well as the efforts of local and state affiliates of these groups, are prime examples of professional associations' efforts to provide in-service opportunities via the institute model. Similar training events are also sponsored by state education agencies, universities, private foundations, and individual consultants.

Institutes have a number of positive features. First, they enable a good deal of information concerning issues of immediate concern to be presented to practitioners. As examples, consider the abundance of recent workshops on topics such as ways of complying with Public Law 94-142, utilizing microcomputers more effectively, and evaluating teachers without violating due process. Related to this is the fact that institutes can be designed quickly to serve the needs of busy practitioners whenever an issue might warrant such specialized training. With policies, laws, and technology changing so rapidly, flexibility in training is a highly prized feature. Another strength of institutes is that they are a convenient way for principals to learn. Recalling again the number of offers for workshops, seminars, and institutes that reach principals, it is hard to imagine that anyone would have trouble in finding some training event of interest being offered somewhere at just about any time that would fit an administrator's schedule.

Disadvantages to institutes are in many ways similar to some of their advantages. For example, the short duration of training events, while appealing because it adds to the convenience factor, also means that no great depth of treatment on particular topics can be expected. At best, participants at seminars receive only limited treatment of important issues. No time can be given for much reading, preparation, and assimilation during the few days, or hours, devoted to the training. This in itself is not necessarily a problem if the content of the training event is such that it can be adequately understood in a relatively short period of time. However, when issues addressed by the institute are more complex, the time limitation may have the negative effect of forcing an issue to be trivialized. Another disadvantage to institutes is that most short-term training events lack opportunities for participants to become involved in the setting of training objectives, determining content, and selecting learning activities. Also, as with university courses, participation tends to be based primarily on one-way communication from institute staff to the participants. Finally, quality control over institutes may be a concern. While the majority of efforts sponsored by professional associations, state departments, and universities are high in quality, caution is necessary in the case of some of the ventures advertised to school administrators. Short-term training events, regardless of their claims, cannot be viewed as quick solutions to problems that require more long-term commitment.

*Competency-Based Training*

Although some might argue that competency-based approaches to the training of school administrators should be more properly classified as preservice rather than in-service programs, we include them as another model with considerable potential. In its broadest sense, competency-based administrator training can provide a useful framework of important knowledge, at-

titudes, and skills toward which an effective school leader may strive. It is in this sense that we suggest that there are currently some competency-based training programs, particularly those sponsored by professional associations, which have great potential for being used as administrator in-service strategies.

One competency-based approach to the training of school principals is the Assessment Center of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), developed in 1975 essentially "to provide school districts with more objective and effective ways of selecting school administrators."[10] The underlying assumption of this approach is that the work of school principals can be described according to 12 skill areas, namely, problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, range of interests, personal motivation, stress tolerance, educational values, oral communication skills, and written communication skills. It is implied that persons possessing these skills make the best candidates for administrative positions.

Another recent effort to describe the work of administrators according to specific competencies can be seen in the work of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). This organization has recently prepared a set of guidelines to assist in the improvement of administrative training. These guidelines suggest that well-prepared school administrators need to be skillful in improving school climate, understanding the political context of schools, implementing instructional management systems, developing curriculum, designing effective in-service, planning for effective use of human and financial resources, and conducting research.[11]

The focus in the NASSP Assessment Center and also in the AASA guidelines is not directed so much toward providing in-service as it is in influencing training programs and initial selection procedures. We have included these approaches and the whole concept of competency-based programs more for their future potential for improving in-service than for what they do at present.

What is intriguing about competency-based programs is that they represent a way to determine precise skills necessary for effective administration performance. The assumption may be made that, when these skills are identified, in-service programs can be more directed toward attaining the skills. In contrast to other in-service models, the competency-based programs may enable principals to work toward professional development in a way superior to the sporadic efforts found in institutes and university courses. Also, because of the heavy involvement of administrators' professional associations, motivation to participate comes from colleagues and not some external agency such as the state education agency.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to competency-based programs. For example, if the specified competencies are accepted as target areas for professional development by principals, there is some concern regarding who will be responsible for providing training. Who would lead school principals toward increasing their decisiveness, stress tolerance, sensitivity, ability to understand the political context of schools, or any other skill? Would trainers be professors? Consultants? Staff from professional associations? Or would in-service sessions degenerate to the swapping of principals' war stories? Questions such as these would need to be answered before competency-based approaches to administrator in-service could achieve their full potential.

*The Academy*

Still another approach to professional development for principals is seen in the recent emergence of the in-service academy. This is an arrangement wherein a school district or state education agency provides classes and other structured learning experiences to professional educators on an ongoing basis. The learning experiences are changed periodically, based on frequent needs assessments. In many ways, the academy approach is similar to the traditional model, with a few important differences.

First, the academy represents an "in-house" effort sponsored by practitioners to address their own perceived needs. There is no reliance on another institution such as the university to offer courses of interest or relevance. Second, participation in academy activities is generally based on an individual's personal motivation, not the certification requirements prescribed by the state or the degree requirements specified by the university. Some current examples of the use of the academy concept for administrator in-service are the Maine Principals' Academy,[12] the Maryland Professional Development Academy,[13] and the Georgia Academy of School Executives.[14]

Major advantages of the academy are found in its structure as a permanent arrangement established to address the continuing educational needs of school practitioners. The academy offers stability that cannot be found in the temporary approaches we have reviewed earlier. For example, while the institute might be able to give the principal tips on "what to do on Monday morning," the academy enables principals to get continuing education so that they are prepared to deal with problems on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and all days of the school year. The academy is an approach to in-service which is controlled to a large extent by the participants—a feature not found in other models. As a result, a major advantage is the relevance of academy offerings. The curriculum of the academy is most often established by an initial survey of needs conducted in the state or district where the academy is established.

Disadvantages of the academy include the fact that most instruction is still based on one-way communication. Furthermore, the issue of who will lead the in-service is not always clear. Frequently, instructors for the academy are external consultants who deal with substantive topics offered in the academy curriculum, but little with the specific context of the organization sponsoring the academy. Consequently, the provider of in-service is someone who comes in with little or no knowledge of the events and conditions present in an organization which have led to the need for the in-service in the first place. Thus, outsiders take control of the planning and carrying out of in-service programs, and participants are again left with little involvement in the process. A final restriction on the academy is that, while there may be an attempt to ensure that academy course offerings are relevant to participants, the danger always exists that the focus of the curriculum will always be on the "here and now," and little emphasis will be placed on long-term solutions. The ultimate concern is that the academy will represent little more than a protracted workshop or institute.

*Networking*

The last major in-service model that we will review is networking, or the linking of individuals in different schools or districts for the purpose of sharing concerns and effective practices on an ongoing basis. There is a significant difference between this approach and the others reviewed in the sense that, in networking, the primary responsibility for controlling the learning experience is directly with the participants themselves and not with their formal professional associations, the state education agency, or some nearby university. Networks tend to be informal arrangements that emerge as the result of administrators seeking other administrators who share similar concerns and potential solutions to problems.

In terms of what recent literature has been saying about the desirable characteristics of in-service experiences—that is, using peer interaction among professionals, avoiding standardized in-service "packages," utilizing participant input in the establishment of in-service objectives and activities, and so forth[15]—networking offers many advantages over the other approaches and models of in-service. For example, the very nature of networking holds that individuals who share common problems are able to come together periodically to gain support from colleagues and also to gain additional insights and support from others who face similar problems. The focus in networking is most definitely on multidirectional communication and much participant involvement. No one plays the role of "teacher" in networking. Topics addressed come directly from the concerns of participants, not from a professor or workshop designer who does not know who will be in the course or the workshop. Finally, networking encourages and is built on the premise that long-term relationships among participants are desirable. As a result, this approach to in-service is different from the isolated learning that goes on in the institute, the university class, or the staff development/in-service academy.

Networking also has some disadvantages. For example, it is not unusual for the common interest groups that come together to form networks ostensibly to deal with school-related concerns to lose their focus and become social gatherings first and professional gatherings next. While the meeting of a group engaged in networking should not resemble the meeting of a corporate board in terms of formality, it should be related to professional issues and not serve solely or primarily as a party for participants. Another problem with networking is that, while the foundation of this arrangement is informality and concerns-based sharing, there can be a tendency for networks to become so informal and loosely knit that members drop in and drop out of the group; there is no long-term commitment to the network group as an instrument of professional development. Finally, while an advantage of networking can be the fact that no one controls the group as the teacher, there can be a problem when responsibility for directing the group is ignored totally. Quite simply, while participant involvement in in-service planning and implementation is unquestionably a key ingredient for effectiveness, someone must still lead.

In this section, five fairly common approaches or models to in-service for school principals have been presented. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Despite any drawbacks suggested, however, the use of any of these models is far superior to a lack of systematic professional and personal support for principals.

In the last section of this paper, we describe one additional approach to in-service. Although it is by no means a panacea, it is being received with enthusiasm by practitioners across the nation. It borrows from and builds on some of the most positive features of the other models we have examined.

### Principals' In-Service Program

As we reviewed the existing models of administrator in-service, we noted that there were a number of concerns regarding in-service programs that might serve as criteria for judging their value. For example, one criterion was that special learner needs of adults must be considered. Adults learn best in situations in which they value the goals of the learning experience and where they can see the relationship between learning activities and stated goals. Adults will learn things that have meaning for their personal future, particularly when they can develop a sense of ownership in the process. There is no reason to suspect that school principals are any different from other adult learners.

The Principals' In-service Program, developed with support from the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (/I/D/E/A/), represents an attempt to develop effective administrator in-service by focusing directly and exclusively on the local school situation and the needs of local principals as participants. An inherent assumption of the program is that principals need a way in which they can learn again how to become better principals by using their present knowledge and their own awareness of needs as a starting point for professional development.

The structure used to enable principals to learn how to use their present knowledge to improve their performance are collegial support groups, each consisting of six to ten principals. These enable principals to work together to practice the behaviors which enable them to work on long- and short-term problems and also to critique openly and honestly their efforts to improve themselves and their school programs. Through collegial support groups, individuals can bring their problems to others and, while following a tightly defined agenda of planned learning activities, share their successes with persons who have knowledge and appreciation of the role of the principal. There are obvious similarities between the collegial support group of the Principals' In-service Program and the general model of networking discussed earlier. The key distinction between the two models, however, is that while networks bring together people based on common interests *regardless* of role, collegial support groups bring together people of common interest and *because* of their role.

The Principals' In-service Program was piloted in 1978-79 with groups of rural, suburban, and urban principals and then introduced to school districts across the nation as more specially trained group facilitators have been trained. The program has expanded to include 145 facilitators leading collegial support groups with more than fifteen hundred principals from 25 states and three foreign countries.

The basic commitment that principals make who volunteer to follow the Principals' In-service Program is to participate in day-long meetings of the collegial support group once each month over at least a two-year period. Four objectives serve as the focus of the monthly sessions which are directed by the facilitator.

1. Each principal, as a member of a collegial support group, designs, implements, and evaluates a plan to increase his or her leadership capability.
2. Each principal designs, implements, and evaluates a school improvement project which involves the staff in addressing an identified need within the school.
3. Members of the collegial support group provide assistance and encouragement to one another in professional development and school improvement efforts.
4. Each principal adopts the search for continuous improvement as a guiding principle and accepts personal responsibility for his or her role in the improvement process.

This type of arrangement has been designed as a way to try to avoid some of the shortcomings which have plagued other administrator in-service approaches. First, the activities of the collegial support groups come directly from the needs and interests of the participating principals. While the trained facilitator works with the group to suggest a framework of structured activities that might be followed, the emphasis is always on the needs of the members of the group and not on the accomplishment of preordained objectives in a course syllabus. Second, the facilitator is trained to avoid behaving as a teacher in front of a class when he or she meets with a group of principals. As a result, the climate is established in the collegial groups for teaching and learning responsibilities to come from the participants as adult learners. Third, the four objectives of the program are constantly brought to the attention of the group so that a clear set of tasks

is always present to keep meetings from becoming only social gatherings or gripe sessions. The fact that the ultimate responsibility of the principal is to increase school effectiveness is constantly reinforced. Finally, the collegial support groups represent ongoing commitments by principals and their districts to make sure that in-service is a regular part of each person's schedule and not a "one-shot" in-service session without follow-up.

The Principals' In-service Program is based on a firm belief that there are many excellent principals in the nation who are talented, committed, and willing to devote energy to improving their own performance and their schools' programs. They truly want to exercise their role as the educational leader of their schools. The reasons why many principals do not achieve their goals, however, are found in the isolation of the role, complete with the frequently heard complaints that principals lack time and are faced with so many daily nagging problems that real professional growth is impossible. Principals rarely have the opportunity to express their concerns and frustrations to other principals who understand the problems without evaluating the performance of their colleagues. The Principals' In-service Program has been received so warmly, we believe, because it enables principals to engage in continuous self-improvement and professional growth. While each of the other in-service models we have reviewed has some merit for increasing the amount of support available to practicing administrators, the Principals' In-service Program represents an effort to make the individual principal responsible for his or her own learning and development. In short, the principal becomes the "number one learner" who can serve as a powerful model to students and staff in his or her school.

### Summary

In this paper, we have reviewed several approaches to in-service education and professional development that have been utilized to improve and support the crucial role of the school principal. Some methods frequently used in this respect—personal reading and travel, for example—have not been included, although they are indeed important. Our discussion here has attempted to point to significant organized efforts which are in use around the country. At the end, we suggest one specific model for in-service that appears to hold promise for helping principals to do a better job. We do not wish to imply that the Principals' In-service Program is so superior to other approaches that it holds all the answers to increasing principal effectiveness. To the contrary, we would hold that the principal's role is so important and so difficult that if an individual had the opportunity to engage in all of the models presented here, then he or she should.

There is still much to do in the area of improving the quality of in-service for school principals. The role of the principal will be increasing in complexity and stress in the future and, as is true with teachers, principals will stay in the same schools for a large part of their careers. There is increasing attention being directed at the need for improving the quality of in-service for teachers. Now we must add to the work being done for administrator in-service as well.

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